To protect confidentiality, the Federal Register requires States to assign a record number to detailed Foster Care and Adoption data submitted to DHHS. This record number (foster care data element number 4 and adoption data element number 5) must be a twelve digit number that cannot be linked to the child except at the State or local level. For monitoring purposes, States must be able to identify the case file for a specific record for three years. ACF has approved two methods for the creation of this record number:

Option 1:   *Sequential Numbering.* States may generate a sequential record number for each child in the submission. The sequencing must begin with '000000000001' having each additional record incremented by 1. Since children may be represented by different sequential numbers for different reporting periods, States must maintain cross reference files for each bi-annual submission to cross walk assigned sequential numbers back to the appropriate case files.

Option 2:   *Encryption.* States may generate an encrypted case number for each child in the submission by applying a mathematical formula to the child's case number to an encrypted case number. States can match the encrypted case number to the original case number by applying the reverse mathematical formula. Confidentiality is maintained by using a mathematical formula that can be identified only by the State transferring data.

The following table summarizes the two options:

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Sequential Numbering	State assigns a sequential record number to each case.	Confidentiality maintained	Sequential record numbering complicates longitudinal case studies. States must maintain cross-walk tables for three years
Encryption	State converts case number to an encrypted number.	Confidentiality maintained Longitudinal case studies simplified Maintaining cross-walk tables is unnecessary.	State must be able to de-code encrypted numbers